

Summary of SA officer priorities August 2023

In August 2023, sparqs ran our annual 'That's Quality' training, aimed at student officers and students' association staff. During the event, we ran an activity to gather student officers' key priorities for 2023/24. Officers were asked to organise their priorities under the 9 building blocks of sparqs' new [Student Learning Experience model](#). This paper summarises these priorities, providing both a concise and a more detailed round-up of officer priorities for the year.

Number of comments made in each block.

	Frequency
Support and Guidance	65
Community and Belonging	55
Student Partnership	46
Assessment and Feedback	34
Resources, Environment & Technologies	30
Learning and Teaching Delivery	25
Progression and Achievement	23
Curriculum	21
Organisation and Management	19
Total	318

Concise summary

Curriculum

- Opportunities for practicals, placements, and work experience.
- Timetabling adapted to student needs.
- An inclusive approach e.g. gender-inclusive language and integrating EDI into curriculum.
- Integration of various other elements into the curriculum, such as sustainability and digital skills.

Resources, Environment & Technologies

- Use of online resources to enhance the learning experience.
- AI guidance to enhance the learning experience and for ethical use of generative AI.
- Increase accessibility of campuses facilities, and a more engaging learning environment.
- Promote health and wellbeing through the physical environment.

Learning and Teaching Delivery

- Update teaching practices and content.
- Include projects, practicals, placements as relevant to the course.
- Staff and students working together to improve the learning experience.
- Support for specific student groups, including students with learning disabilities.

Progression and Achievement

- Preparation for post-uni life: life skills workshops, interview support and workshops.
- Support students to develop employability skills. Workshops with industry professionals.
- Use data from excellence award nominations to enhance teaching practices.

- Ensuring timely academic misconduct case outcomes.

Assessment and Feedback

- Encourage creative assessment over exam-based assessments.
- Revise the policy for academic extensions and for resits.
- Establish a common framework or expected standard for feedback.
- Review the policy on using AI for assessments.

Community and Belonging

- Host events aiming to foster student unity and socialising.
- Creation of or support for specific groups of students e.g. LGBT+, BAME, disability, student parents, students with neurodiversity.
- Address barriers to students feeling part of the community. Create mentorship and buddy schemes.
- Involve more students in the Students' Association and in student-led campaigns.

Student Partnership

- Student partnership agreements with the institution. Help staff colleagues recognise the value of student participation in decision making.
- Work in partnership to improve engagement, communication, and data collection. Partnership commitment to equality and inclusivity. Better transparency between institution and SA (and student body).
- Enhance the student rep system, support for reps, emphasise the importance of partnerships e.g. at SSLCs.
- Enhance the visibility of the association for students.

Support and Guidance

- Improving the induction process with information on support available. Sign-post wellbeing services.
- Academic support for students.
- Support for good mental health; listening and counselling.
- Support structures for diverse student groups.
- Financial support through a Cost of Living campaign. Address travel costs.

Organisation and Management

- Support resilience of sabbatical officers.
- Use of attendance policies to aid achievement rather than adding pressure to struggling students.
- Accessibility on campus, and improvements to class timetabling.
- Accountability for clarity on course content on websites.

Detailed summary

Curriculum

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Engaging students in strategic projects and ensuring effective teaching methods. The curriculum being reviewed and supported by student partnerships.
- Clarity of mandatory content, reducing instances of repeated material / levels. Timetabling adapted to student needs.
- Opportunities for work experience and volunteer opportunities, practical modules and placements, and collaborative student group projects.
- The curriculum being restructured to include more diverse voices, a more inclusive approach to teaching, integrating gender-inclusive language and EDI into curriculum and teaching.
- Integration of various other elements into the curriculum:
 - sustainability
 - ethical literacy education
 - digital skills
 - graduate opportunities

Resources, Environment & Technologies

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Use of online resources to enhance the learning experience. Updated technology.
- Access to online tools should be embedded, and tools demonstrated to students. Review the quality of online L+T. Online teaching should be designed to aid learning, not laziness. Lecture recording should be the default where possible.
- Create AI guidance to enhance the learning experience. Centralized services to promote collaboration and ethical use of generative AI.
- Expand facilities, increase accessibility of campuses facilities, and a more engaging learning environment. Strengthening relationships between campuses to enhance learning experiences. Focus groups for library renovation.
- Use of resources to be set within circular economy framework.
- Promote health and wellbeing initiatives, music in the atrium, outside seating, fitness suite. Creating quiet spaces, fun spaces, sensory room, and 24-hour study space for undergraduates.

Learning and Teaching Delivery

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Advocate for better teaching and learning experience. Update teaching practices and content.
- Staff and students working together to improve the learning experience. For example:
 - developing skills gaps workshops
 - promoting awareness on academic misconduct
 - include projects, practicals, placements as relevant to the course
 - instituting a peer-to-peer learning structure
- Support for specific student groups, including:
 - Improve the postgrad international student experience
 - Train teaching staff and support staff to support students with learning disabilities
 - Improving accessibility of terminology for second language students
- Introducing a compulsory pre-metric module addressing issues like academic misconduct, GBV, climate change. Introduce a Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) to enhance student leadership.

Progression and Achievement

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Preparation for post-uni life: life skills workshops, interview support and workshops. Workshops on professional creativity and freelance skills. Peer support groups. Connections with City Attributes to Volunteer Awards Scheme.
- Internships. Support students to develop employability skills. Improve financial support for work placements. Workshops with industry professionals (inc for graduates).
- Analyse data on progression, including between campuses.
- Use data from excellence award nominations to enhance teaching practices, updating lecture content.
- Encouraging student voice in response to industrial action.
- Ensuring timely academic misconduct case outcomes.

Assessment and Feedback

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Improve the assessment and feedback process. Clear assessment timetables. Adaptable assessments to fit student needs and industry expectations.
- Revise the policy for academic extensions. Online portal for applying for extensions, with guidance on process and evidence required. Also improve and simplify (and speed up) the resit process.
- Encourage creative assessment over exam-based assessments, promoting equity. Reduce exams.
- Students and staff working together to evaluate student performance. More feedback to students, and reduce waiting times for receipt of feedback. Increase contact time with tutors for quality feedback.
- Establish a common framework or expected standard for feedback to ensure constructive and effective feedback. Clearer return dates.
- Review the policy on using AI for assessments.

Community and Belonging

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Students feel valued. Be approachable.
- Large events aiming to foster student unity and socialising, between courses and faculties etc. Host events suitable for all. Society and club events, opportunities for volunteering.
- Theories of care informed practice are used to fight racism and reduce student isolation. A program of radical workshops and events. Creation of or support for specific groups of students e.g. LGBT+, BAME, disability, student parents, students with neurodiversity.
- Create an EDI-friendly campus, with sports clubs and gym facilities, sustainable safe spaces to prioritise clubs and societies. Gaming tournaments, sports clubs and gym facilities cater to different student interests, language and culture café.
- Consider how all these points apply to students on satellite campuses.
- Address barriers to student feeling part of the community. Create mentorship and buddy schemes between years/schools to facilitate knowledge transfer and community building.
- Work on a Student Mental Health Agreement with the institution. Let's talk events. Establish a Student Relations Committee.
- Involve more students in the Students' Association. Student-led campaigns. Improve environmental awareness on campus.
- Establish a community/network for school-college partnership, enhancing retention and well-being.
- Avoid placing deadlines on dates of cultural and religious importance.
- Provide accommodation support, offer free breakfast, and free buses for all students.

Student Partnership

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Recognition of the work of reps and officers.
- Student partnership agreements with the institution. Student partnership projects. Reciprocal relationship/structure, not endless committees. Help staff colleagues recognise the value of student participation in decision making.
- Strong student representative dialogue and collaborative network, promoting student participation in decision-making with students on committees (inc EDI, LGBTQ+, L&T). Partnership commitment to equality and inclusivity. Better transparency between institution and SA (and student body).
- Work in partnership to improve engagement, communication, and data collection. Meet-the-manager type events.
- Enhance the visibility of the association for students, propose new clubs and societies, reopen the students' association building.
- Enhance the student rep system, support for reps, a rep reward system. More events for class representatives. Emphasise the importance of partnerships e.g. at SSLCs.
- Practical solutions for rep management such as MS Teams; a class rep hub with resources in one place.
- Reimagine the Postgraduate Representation system to better represent PGs. Improve communication including between campuses (inc overseas campuses).
- Reduce student surveying. Make surveys relevant to students. Close the feedback loop and build trust in student voice.
- Assessing crossover between student reps and other student leadership (like peer learning) to develop community and improve award/recognition.

Support and Guidance

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Academic support for students. Upgrading academic advisers to Personal Academic Tutors (PATs). Highlight support services to help students get help when needed.
- Improving the induction process with information on support available. Sign-post wellbeing services.
- Prioritise support for good mental health, listening and counselling. Inclusive learning, safe events, ensuring students feel valued, advocating for improved mental health facilities. Peer support.
- Student career/employment support. Support with transport.
- Support structures for diverse student groups, such as international students, local students, student parents. Enhance inclusivity and diversity. Trans inclusion including provision of G/N changing facilities and gender affirming funds. Extra support for students with additional needs. Improving GBV awareness.
- Establish / reinforce connections between Sports Union and Students' Association. Working alongside student services can help students access necessary resources.
- Financial support through a Cost of Living campaign, improving canteen services, and developing sustainable student pantry partnerships. Address travel costs with local transport companies. Financial support around student accommodation, e.g. reserved housing with agencies and better guarantor support. Fighting against student poverty and food insecurity. Help tackle student debt. The Good Cause system should be made fairer and easier for students to access.

Organisation and Management

In this area, officers wish to prioritise:

- Ensuring proper student representation at meetings of management and trustees. Support resilience of sabbatical officers.
- Strategic use of attendance policies – to aid achievement rather than adding pressure to struggling students.
- Improvements to class timetabling. Accountability for clarity on course content on websites.
- Reduce staff workload.
- Accessibility on campus. Transport links.

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